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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2010
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [UNGA](#) [KPKO](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR INCENTIVES TO STRENGTHEN UNAMA

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. This is a guidance request - see para 7.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: SYG Ban is seeking U.S. support for a special allowance for UN staff serving at the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to address ongoing compensation disparities in order to reduce UNAMA's current vacancy rate of more than 20 per cent. At the same time, the Secretary-General is requesting our endorsement in principle on a system-wide human resources package designed to streamline contracting and harmonize conditions of service within the Organization. During the Fifth Committee's March session, the U.S. and Japan sought to defer action on harmonization proposals until the 63rd UNGA. In order to achieve a special allowance for UNAMA, USUN proposes to support and work hard to achieve Fifth Committee endorsement of SYG Ban's special allowance plan. USUN seeks Department guidance regarding Ban's request for U.S. backing for appropriate streamlining of contracts and harmonization of conditions of service which are due to be concluded in the Fall. END SUMMARY.

UNAMI INCENTIVES

¶3. (U) The UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) has had an incentive program for UNAMI personnel (Special Iraq Allowance, or "SIA") in effect since July 2005. Since then, staff vacancy rates have fallen from a high of 55 per cent to 34 per cent currently. UNAMI staff turnover has been reduced to 23 per cent. The SIA provides UNAMI staff with an additional USD 1,620 per month, in addition to the Miscellaneous Subsistence Allowance (USD 105/day), hazard pay (USD 1,300/month), and base salary they also receive.

SPECIAL AFGHANISTAN ALLOWANCE

¶4. (U) The estimated annual cost for a similar Special Afghanistan Allowance, or "SSA," would be 4.8 million USD. If approved, it would remain in effect until such time that the GA adopts a new human resource management package to harmonize conditions of service throughout the UN system.

PRIOR OPPOSITION TO UNAMA INCENTIVES PACKAGE

¶5. (U) In November 2007, the Secretary-General submitted a proposal for a SSA to benefit UNAMA personnel, pointing out that problems in attracting and retaining staff to serve in Afghanistan were jeopardizing the success of the mission. In reviewing the SYG's request, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) maintained that the special allowance provided to UNAMI personnel in Iraq was an exceptional and provisional measure that was not

intended to set a precedent for other missions. In doing so, the ACABQ emphasized that the issue of improved compensation and benefits for UNAMA and all field staff was being addressed by the Fifth Committee in connection with proposals for Secretariat-wide harmonization of conditions of service and streamlining of contractual arrangements.

¶16. (U) Fifth Committee members failed to reach consensus during the Committee's First Resumed Session in March 2008 on the agenda item pertaining to harmonization of conditions of service and streamlining of contractual arrangements. An informal proposal was worked out with the SYG and U/SYG for Management Barcena approving a package negotiated in the Fifth Committee whereby all costs for harmonization of conditions of service would be absorbed through savings or offsets. This proposal was rejected informally by the Group of 77 and China (G-77), and was not submitted to the Fifth Committee. Action on the SYG's proposals was deferred until the 63rd session in the Fall of 2008, where negotiations will commence afresh. Even if the Fifth Committee reaches agreement during the Fall session on the SYG's proposals for harmonization of conditions of service, such conditions will not take effect until July 2009 at an estimated annual cost of 89.1 million USD.

GUIDANCE REQUEST

¶17. (C) Following a discussion between SYG Ban and Ambassador Khalilzad on April 15,, USUN will support Ban's re-submission of his proposal for a Special Afghanistan Allowance to the Fifth Committee for action in the May resumed session. USUN also seeks Department approval to signal to the SYG that we are prepared, in principle, to endorse and fund an

appropriate package dealing with the streamlining of contracts and harmonization of conditions of service throughout the Secretariat when this matter is considered again by the Fifth Committee during the Fall. USUN welcomes Department views as to whether we should support the SYG's original harmonization proposal, or the revised package referred to in paragraph 5 above negotiated by Fifth Committee members during the March session.

Khalilzad